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SUBJECT Robert Gates's Confirmation Hearings

TOM BROKAW: Robert Gates, the man that President Reagan has named to head the CIA, is learning firsthand just how strongly Congress feels about the Agency's independent ways. As NBC's John Dancy reports tonight, when Gates appeared before the Senate Intelligence Committee for the second day of his confirmation hearings, he was the target once again of still more very pointed questions.

JOHN DANCY: After a day of tough questioning yesterday and facing another one today, Gates made a rueful little joke to photographers. He made it in front of an open microphone.

ROBERT GATES: Remember that Country and Western song, "Take This Job and Shove It"?

DANCY: Gates, who was William Casey's Deputy, revealed he had disagreed with the Iran arms sale. Gates told senators that last September, after two more Americans were kidnapped in Lebanon, he had recommended to Casey that the Iran arms deal be scrapped.

GATES: I told the Director that I thought the entire activity should be called off, that the whole policy was a bad idea.

DANCY: Some senators thought Gates was ducking the Contra diversion. Gates testified he learned last October from CIA official Charles Allen that some Iran arms money might have been passed on to the Contras. Gates testified he passed that information on to National Security Adviser John Poindexter.

SENATOR BILL BRADLEY: So you basically passed the buck

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to Poindexter.

GATES: The fact is that the basic motivation was not to sit on the information, not to try and cover it up, not to shut up Mr. Allen; but instead, to move the issue to higher levels of authority and responsibility.

SENATOR BRADLEY: So you passed it to Poindexter. And then you, essentially, left the country.

[Laughter]

GATES: That is correct.

DANCY: In two days of hearings, senators have made it clear they want Gates to do a better job than William Casey did of keeping them informed.

Bradley asked Gates what he would do if he became CIA Director, then found out there were written presidential orders for CIA covert actions that Gates was not aware of.

GATES: Well, the first thing I would do would be to hop in a car and come up here.

[Laughter]

SENATOR BRADLEY: Well, you're learning, Mr. Gates.

GATES: Nobody every accused me of being slow, Senator.

DANCY: The Intelligence Committee is to vote on the Gates nomination in about two weeks. But the committee could reopen hearings if there is new information in the Tower Commission report concerning Gates.